



THE NAVAJO NATION

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT & VICE PRESIDENT

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Navajo state of emergency declared because of heavy rains in northern Apache, Navajo counties

WINDOW ROCK, Ariz. – The Navajo Commission on Emergency Management and Navajo Nation President Joe Shirley, Jr., declared a State of Emergency here Monday because of increased flash flooding and the risk of property damage, loss of life and significant impact to public health and community infrastructure.

Monday evening, the Wide Ruins Chapter experienced a massive flood in which two people in a vehicle were caught, and a family was forced to climb on top of their house to stay out of the floodwaters.

Rock Point had 16 families stranded by a flash flood. Black Mesa had three families stranded, and Dilcon Chapter had one family caught in the flooding.

Areas that have received sporadic flooding include the southwestern Navajo communities of Dilcon, Bird Springs, White Cone and areas north of the cities of Holbrook and Winslow, said Johnny Johnson, incident commander for Navajo Emergency Operations.

Last week, the New Mexico areas of Lake Valley, Torreon, Becenti, Alamo, Mariano Lake and Manuelito had flooding. Torreon and White Rock chapters lost their electric power for four days when a flood took out the power line to the communities, he said. Torreon and Pueblo Pintado were impacted when rain caused a dam to break.

Other areas that received flooding are Rock Point Chapter, Black Mesa Chapter, Wide Ruins Chapter, Pinon Chapter, Tachee/Blue Gap, Alamo Chapter.

“With the recent rainfall, it’s a prudent governmental decision,” commission chairman Herman Shorty said of the state of emergency. “Also, this instrument allows for immediate assistance from outside entities.”

The declaration is the first step to allow the Bureau of Indian Affairs Roads Department, Navajo and Apache counties, and the states to extend emergency funding if necessary, he said.

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“We’ve been blessed with much-needed moisture and rainfall now that the monsoon season is here but it comes with flooding of washes and our roads, and we have to take measures to help those families who become stranded to ensure everyone remains safe,” he said.

The Commission on Emergency Management has recommended that all branches of the Navajo Nation begin to plan and implement their respective emergency responses and activate emergency funds pursuant to their emergency plans.

An Emergency Operations Center has been activated at the Navajo Nation Department of Public Safety in Window Rock. Six Incident Command Posts have been established at Rock Point, Black Mesa, Dilcon, Alamo,

Wide Ruins and Pinon chapters. Others will be established if needed.

Roads that have been washed out from weekend floods were repaired Monday, but heavy rain from last night has washed them out again, said Selena Manychildren, public information officer for the Commission.

"The Emergency Operations Center's main emphasis is on public safety, roads and supplies such as water, food and medication to people under medical care," she said. "Community Health Representatives and chapters are assisting with assessments and providing relief. These flash floods cause power outages and contamination of water systems."

She cautioned the public to be on alert and to monitor neighbors and the situation. Travel is not recommended in areas receiving heavy rains.

Thunderstorms tend to form in the afternoon and heavy rains begin in late afternoon into the evening.

Sand bags are available upon request from the Department of Emergency Management in Window Rock, she said. **For information, call 928-871-6892.**

Navajo Mountain reported black water in its reservoir that has been attributed to the recent fires that posed hazards to the spring-fed water system. The spring is located on the mountaintop. Navajo Mountain was devastated by a month long fire from June 10 through Mid-July.

Alamo Chapter continues to have water problems because a flash flood washed out the water system that fed the north side community on August 30.

Tachee/Blue Gap also has a waterline washout that was reported to the Navajo Tribal Utility Authority on Monday.

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